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ART. VI.—*The Life and Correspondence of the RIGHT HON. HENRY ADDINGTON, first Viscount SIDMOUTH.*
By the HON. GEORGE PELLEW, D. D., Dean of Norwich. London: John Murray. 1847. 3 vols. Svo.

THE name of the late Lord Sidmouth is familiar to all who are conversant with the annals of Great Britain for the last sixty years. His life, commencing in 1757, just before the accession of George III., and extending to almost four-score and ten years, embraces one of the most important eras in the history of the world. For the magnitude and variety of its events, deeply affecting, as they already have done, and are still destined to do, the social and moral condition of mankind; for the host of distinguished personages this period exhibits, whether of kings and emperors on their thrones, of statesmen wielding the destinies of nations, of ecclesiastics, both in the highest and subordinate ranks, exerting by their learning and virtues an appropriate, or by their ambition and worldliness a questionable power; of heroes military and naval, of whom were Nelson, Napoleon, and Wellington, changing by the issues of a single battle the whole position of Europe; together with a countless host in the walks of literature and art, of science and philosophy, whom the thoughtful reader may number by hundreds,—perhaps no single period in history can be selected of greater moment.

The nobleman whose life is here recorded was by his position and length of years a spectator of, and for a great portion of the time an efficient actor in, these transactions. Though confessedly inferior in genius and intellectual power to many with whom in the long course of his public career he was associated, to Pitt and Canning, to Windham, Wilberforce, Sheridan, and Fox, yet by his well-balanced mind and respectable gifts, by his industry, faithfulness, and political integrity, by his disinterestedness, firmness, and independence in the discharge of official trusts, and, crowning all, by the acknowledged excellence of his personal character, he obtained his full share of influence with his colleagues, the confidence of his sovereign, and the devoted attachment of his friends. As Speaker of the House of Commons,—that office which confers the rank of the first commoner of

England, to which he was reëlected with great unanimity in several successive Parliaments, — Mr. Addington acquired perhaps his highest reputation. “No Speaker,” says Dr. Pellew, “ever succeeded better in commanding the attention of the House, or enjoyed to a larger extent its respect. He possessed much of that indescribable attraction of conversation, appearance, and general demeanour, which is so often observed to concentrate upon one the favor and affection of many.” “We were all very sorry to vote against you,” said Mr. Sheridan, addressing him in the name of the opposing party, on his first taking the chair; and when, twelve years afterwards, in the troublesome crisis of 1801, Mr. Addington reluctantly exchanged the place, where he had gathered so many laurels and won so many hearts, for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer and the consuming cares of the Premiership of England, he found, to his cost, that he had left a bed of roses for a bed of thorns. This is well exhibited by his biographer.

“A singular contrast is presented in Parliament, by the manner in which the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Prime-Minister of the country are respectively treated. The former is regarded as a person who can do nothing wrong; the latter as one who can do nothing right. All parties unite to confer honor on the Speaker; both leaders and followers lavish their courtesy upon him. But the case is generally very different with respect to the Prime-Minister, who is viewed rather as a common mark, against which every discontented person may discharge his shafts with impunity; and who has a phalanx of avowed opponents canvassing all his measures, refusing him the credit of success, imputing to him the blame of every failure, and watching all occasions to overthrow him. Mr. Addington experienced the usual treatment of Prime-Ministers at the very moment he vacated that chair, from whence, as from a land-locked harbour, he had so long viewed the storm raging in the political ocean around him, without being affected by it.” — “During the same evening on which the grateful thanks of the House were unanimously voted to him for his conduct as Speaker, his brother was obliged to appeal to the first principles of justice in his behalf by claiming for his honorable relative, that he might not be prejudged.” — Vol. i. pp. 354, 355.

The period at which Mr. Addington was thus called to the ministry was one of unexampled difficulty, demanding

high wisdom and unshrinking nerves. The workings of the French Revolution in the minds of the people in Great Britain, as well as elsewhere, diffusing sentiments unfriendly to loyalty ; the rising power of Bonaparte, then fast hastening to its height ; his threatened invasion in 1801, which, until the signing of the treaty of Amiens, was the subject of anxious solicitude to the whole kingdom ; the whole conduct of the Peninsular war, which, from the renewal of hostilities in 1803 to the final defeat of Napoleon on the field of Waterloo, lasted full twelve years, dividing honest opinions, and furnishing in its frequent disasters and intolerable expense perpetual occasion of attack upon the ministry ; the utter failure of the crown, as in the memorable cases of Horne Tooke, William Stone, and others, to obtain from juries convictions in its own prosecutions for libel and high-treason, notwithstanding the most determined efforts of judges for the purpose ; and, finally, the long perplexity caused by those investigations, once and again forced upon the government, into the conduct of his queen by that worst of husbands and most selfish of princes, George IV. ;— these and other causes, aggravated at intervals by the suffering and rebellious condition of Ireland, and by the distress and riots of the manufacturing districts in England, made the work of administration, at no time easy, then especially arduous and embarrassing. Place and power, so eagerly sought, so tenaciously grasped, and with such reluctance resigned, must needs have great attractions to compensate for their heavy cares. In England, where they are bestowed at the pleasure of the sovereign, but can be held only with the concurrence of the House of Commons, that “fear of change” which perplexes nations must often perplex ministers ; and if, as we can readily believe upon less authority than can be shown for it, “uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,” the uneasiness must be shared in full proportion by the Lord Chancellor, who keeps the king’s conscience, and by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who keeps his purse ; but neither of whom can keep his own place, if the king’s faithful or rebellious Commons withhold their sanction to any important measure. Few instances can be adduced of a ministry persisting to retain office, who could not command a decent majority in the House of Commons.

For the responsible offices which Mr. Addington suc-

cessively filled, he was qualified, as we have said, by the respectable endowments of his mind and the trainings of a thorough education. His father was Anthony Addington, an eminent physician, first of Reading and afterwards of London, whither he removed in 1754, and where Henry, his oldest son, was born. At twelve years of age, he was removed from private tuition to Winchester school, and became pupil of the assistant master, George Isaac Huntingford, known among scholars by his eminent attainments in Greek literature, by whom he was tenderly beloved, and with whom, even at that early age, “a friendship almost immediately sprang up, very unusual in parties occupying their relative position, and highly honorable to both.” The friendship thus commenced continued till the death of Dr. Huntingford, then, by his own merits and the patronage of his grateful pupil, Bishop of Hereford and Warden of Winchester, in 1832.

“Huntingford’s correspondence, during that whole period of sixty-four years, breathes a spirit of devoted attachment almost surpassing that of a parent. It soared, indeed, far beyond the common height of human friendships, regarding the personal gratification or worldly success of its object as nothing, compared with the elevation of his moral character, and his advancement in truth, fortitude, self-control, and all those manly and Christian virtues which merit, if they cannot command, success. The advice of such a man was of almost incalculable value to his youthful friend, its sole object being to instil into his mind noble and generous principles. The Christian and patriot are visible in every sentiment.”

It was a distinguished happiness of Mr. Addington to have been placed thus early under such an influence, the fruits of which, as we may hereafter see, were distinctly visible through the whole course of his life. From Winchester he removed to Brazen Nose College, in 1774, and having honorably terminated his academical career, commenced the study of the law and was entered of Lincoln’s Inn in 1780. In 1781, he married the daughter and co-heiress of Leonard Hammond, Esq., and immediately established himself with his young bride in a somewhat humble residence in Southampton Street, London, fully intending to prosecute his chosen profession, and quite unconscious of the events which were shortly to change his destiny. On the occasion

of his marriage, his friend Huntingford offered his congratulations “to the first and best and most valued of his pupils”; and as the letter is full of good thoughts upon a subject naturally interesting to mankind, we extract a portion.

“I know but two maxims for the matrimonial life: one is, not to think all must be happiness, complete, unmixed with anxiety; the other is, for both to preserve mutual compliance, and to give and take. Matrimony, if it heightens the joys, embitters the sorrows of life. Mutual condescension and deference to each other’s opinion prevent a multitude of unnecessary and sometimes unguarded words; and, believe me, excepting one’s character and the character of those we love, there is not a thing in life worth disputing about. As the master of a family, you can now set a shining example of every domestic virtue to all around you. Were I master of a house, I should make it my custom never to meet my family in the morning, nor to part with them at night, without praying for the blessing of Heaven on me and mine, convinced as I am of the infinite utility of family prayer. In those who have been well educated, it preserves a sense of reliance on God, which alone can give dignity to our sentiments and rectitude to our actions. To those who are in lower capacities, prayers are as lessons. They teach the grand points of morality and truth, and unite the several branches of a house in a more perfect harmony and benevolence.”—Vol. i. p. 26.

From the same letter it appears, that, before Dr. Huntingford had become acquainted with his friend’s matrimonial engagement, he had sent him three Greek odes of his own composition, intended for publication, with a request that he would criticize them, without sparing any fault. But it also appears, that in young Addington’s mind the love of Greek had been quite displaced by other emotions, and the unfortunate poems, soliciting his criticism, remained unread and forgotten. How meekly their classic author submitted to the delay, and how gently he could intimate his wishes to receive back his literary offspring, after so long an absence, will be seen in the following postscript.

“Whenever you are quite at leisure, I should be obliged to you for the three copies of Greek verses which were sent you in the spring.”

His last meeting with his constituents at Devizes he represents to his brother as having been a painful one to all

parties ; and a few days afterwards he received, what to his affectionate and generous spirit must have conveyed the highest pleasure, “the unanimous thanks of that constituency for the many and eminent public services which he had rendered to his country, during the many years he had represented them in Parliament ; for his patriotic conduct in obeying the call of his sovereign to take the first place in his councils ; for the respite he procured to the country, by a peace shortened only by the implacable spirit of the enemy ; for the bold, vigorous, and decisive measures he pursued when peace was no longer compatible with the honor of the nation, whereby the country was placed on a rock of security ; and, lastly, for his patriotism in retiring from the helm of state, when the intrigues of party and the voice of faction impeded the constitutional exercise of the executive government, and threatened to render abortive the wisest plans and most efficient councils.” After congratulating him on his peerage, and the nation on his resuming a share in the government, the address concluded by expressing “pride and satisfaction, that a man so deserving of their thanks should have commenced his public life as their representative, and had continued to fill the same seat until the present period ; and that, during six successive elections, no circumstance had occurred by which the honor of the representative or the independence of the electors had, in any respect, been sullied.”

The relations of Lord Sidmouth with his constituents were, far beyond the common measure of such connections, those of mutual confidence and respect. From the brief extract we have given from their address, it will be perceived how important were the services which their representative had rendered ; and it was mutually honorable to him and to them, as he frequently declared, that “during the numerous elections that occurred during the twenty-two years for which he represented the borough, he never was put to the smallest expense, nor experienced a single attempt to interfere with the freedom of his vote.” With the exception of Mr. Wilberforce, who represented for more than a quarter of a century the county of York, we do not recall a single individual who maintained his place in the House of Commons so long under like honorable conditions. There seems to

have been much congeniality in the characters, as well as the history, of these excellent men ; and the integrity, not less in this respect than in many others, of their political career stands in singular contrast with the corruption and bribery by which, in instances not a few, and at the cost of whole fortunes, some of the most distinguished men with whom they were associated purchased and repurchased their places.

It would tempt us much beyond the limits of a single article were we to survey the whole administration of Lord Sidmouth, before and after his elevation to the peerage, and during his union with, or after his separation from, Mr. Pitt. The Peace of Amiens, concluded March 27th, 1802, he justly regarded as the great act of his administration. It was altogether in accordance with his own mild and pacific character ; and when, before the expiration of a year, by the artful policy of the First Consul of France, that treaty was terminated, Mr. Addington declared in the House of Commons, that he "at length engaged in hostilities only because it was no longer possible for him to remain at peace."

Of the distinguished persons with whom Lord Sidmouth was associated in the course of his eventful public life, the first and most conspicuous was William Pitt, the son of the celebrated Lord Chatham, and himself yet more celebrated by the precocity of his gifts, by the early age at which he attained his high political elevation, and by the commanding influence which he exerted over the mind of his sovereign, and over the councils of the nation, for nearly a quarter of a century. He was brought into the House of Commons by the patronage of a rich holder of boroughs, but soon aspired to the representation of the University of Cambridge, of which he was an honored son. Here, however, his youthful ambition met a salutary rebuke. He was at first treated with contempt by some of the heads and members of college, one of whom was said to have almost thrown the door in his face, and to have wondered at the impudence of the young man, thus to come down and disturb the peace of the University. But when, a few months afterwards, he appeared as the first minister of the crown, with gifts and places, bishoprics and deaneries, at his disposal, the scene was changed ; and he who had been so lately rejected as unworthy of their

votes was now welcomed with fervent enthusiasm, and flattered, though in classic terms, with most unchristian adulation.*

There can be no doubt that Lord Sidmouth was treated with great duplicity and unfairness by Mr. Pitt, when the latter wished to resume office. To the preëminent gifts of this statesman, his subduing eloquence, and the commanding influence he maintained, not less within the circle of his private friendships, than over the councils of the empire, these volumes, with all other records of the times, most amply testify. But they also exhibit him, as should all faithful history, in the undeniable faults of his character, and show that, where place and power were concerned, he partook of the infirmities of mortal men. That his was a generous nature, and that he was at first sincere in his professions of friendship to Mr. Addington, there appears no reason to question. But when, with the collisions of opinion, at one time with his sovereign, and at another with his colleagues, he found himself compelled in honor, though with deep reluctance, to resign the Premiership to his friend, he betrayed the jealousy which belongs to ordinary minds. He insidiously thwarted Mr. Addington. On some occasions, he went over to the opposition, joined in the cry which was continually raised against the inefficiency of that administration, rested not till he had supplanted it, and, as is often to be observed in such cases, pursued, when in place, the same measures which, while out of it, he had himself condemned. Such is the common heartlessness of aspiring statesmen ; and the history of the friendship and alienation of these distinguished personages, a friendship commenced so auspiciously and terminated so mournfully, much as was that

* "It was on this occasion," says his biographer, that "Dr. Paley, being appointed to preach before the University of Cambridge on the day when Mr. Pitt, after his elevation to the Premiership, made his first appearance at St. Mary's, is said to have chosen this singular text,—‘ There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?’ — John vi. 9. A lady, who had seen this story in a newspaper, inquired of Paley if it was true. ‘ Why, no, madam,’ replied he; ‘ I certainly never preached such a sermon. I was not at Cambridge at the time. But I remember, that once, talking with a friend about the bustle and confusion which Mr. Pitt’s appearance would cause in the University, I said that if I had been there, and was asked to preach on the occasion, I would have taken that passage for my text’ ” ; — of which, however, we should rather commend the wit than the decorum.

of Burke and Fox, is but another illustration of the incompatibility of faithful personal regard with the strivings of political ambition.

Nor is the history of Mr. Pitt without its monitions of another sort. The exhausting nature of his employments, the heavy cares of a place, burdensome, perhaps, beyond those of any earthly office, at the period through which he held it, combined with the temptations of a solitary life, too easily persuaded him to indulgence. He was known to drink freely of port; and on one occasion, when called upon to explain and vindicate some measure of his administration, he so clearly betrayed his infirmity, that one of his friends assured him that he had suffered deep mortification and a head-ache all the next night, in thinking of him. Mr. Pitt's reply showed, that, whatever might have been the feelings of others, he had no very compunctionous visitations of conscience for himself; — “For it seemed to him,” he said, “an excellent arrangement, that his friend should have all the head-ache and he all the port.”

With such workings of political ambition, and such indulgences in personal habits, it might seem difficult to admit, what it has been pretended even his enemies were willing to confess, that in Mr. Pitt's failings, or in his delinquencies, there was nothing “mean, paltry, or low.” We must rather accord with Lord Brougham, in his just and discriminating estimate of his character, that “of such errors no satisfactory defence can be made”; though he was amiable in private life and fondly cherished by his friends, “that the ambition cannot be pronounced very lofty, which showed that place, mere high station, was so dear to it, as to be sought without regard,” as in more than one instance was shown, “to its just concomitant, power, and clung to, after being stripped of this, the only attribute that can recommend it to noble minds. Nor can any thirst for power itself, any ambition, be it of the most exalted kind, ever justify the measures which he contrived for getting rid of those former coadjutors of his own, whose leading object was reform, even if they had overstepped the bounds of law in the pursuit of their common purpose.” In this remark, Lord Brougham especially refers to Mr. Pitt's conduct on the African slave-trade, and goes on to state, that while no man felt more strongly on the subject than he, and while he uttered speeches against it which all agreed

were among the finest of his noble orations, yet “for eighteen years of his life he suffered that odious traffic to grow and prosper under the fostering influence of British capital ; and after letting hundreds of thousands be torn from their own country, and carried to perpetual misery in ours, while one stroke of his pen might have stopped it for ever, he could only be brought to issue, a few months before his death, the order in council which at length destroyed the pestilence.* This,” concludes Lord Brougham, “is by far the gravest charge to which Mr. Pitt’s memory is exposed”; and it leaves a shade resting upon his reputation as a man, which, God be praised, few would take, to be the first of orators or the greatest of ministers.

But it would be unjust to the memory of Mr. Pitt not to admit, what the author of these memoirs is earnest to assert, “that all his spontaneous feelings were most friendly, just, and honorable.” “ Whenever,” says Dr. Pellew, “he exercised, uncontrolled, his natural generosity, and that kindness of disposition so peculiarly belonging to him, his mind displayed its real nobility ; and of this his behaviour towards Lord Sidmouth exhibited proofs, even to the last, in the delight he showed at their reconciliation, in the emotion he could not conceal at their second separation, and in the deep and affectionate sympathy he showed to his friend under his domestic trials.”

From these two friends and rivals the transition is easy to their royal master, George III., a monarch whose reign is not more remarkable for its almost unprecedented duration, than for the events, pregnant and weighty, which it included. Of all his ministers, excepting perhaps Lord North, Sidmouth seems to have been most beloved by the king. He

* “How could he,” indignantly asks Lord Brougham, in his beautiful memoir of Wilberforce, contrasting the conduct of that eminent philanthropist with the course of Mr. Pitt upon this subject,—“how could he, who never suffered any of his coadjutors, much less his underlings, in office to thwart his will even in trivial matters,—he who would have cleared any of the departments of half their occupants, had they presumed to have an opinion of their own upon a single item of any budget, or an article in the year’s estimates,—how could he, after shaking the walls of the senate with the thunders of his majestic eloquence, exerted with a zeal which set at defiance all suspicions of his entire sincerity, quietly suffer that the object just before declared to be the nearest to his heart should be ravished from him when within his sight, nay, within his reach, by the votes of secretaries and under-secretaries,—the mere pawns of his board?”

called him “his own Chancellor of the Exchequer,” and was accustomed to address him in terms of personal friendship. He probably found in the gentle spirit of this minister a relief from the decisive and even authoritative tone which Pitt, when occasion urged or the monarch resisted, could always employ. His character is thus exhibited by Lord Brougham :—

“ Of a narrow understanding, which no culture had enlarged ; of an obstinate disposition, which no education, perhaps, could have humanized ; of strong feelings in ordinary things, and a resolute attachment to all his own opinions and predilections, George III. possessed much of the firmness of purpose which, being exhibited by men of contracted mind, without any discrimination, and as pertinaciously when they are in the wrong as when they are in the right, lends to their characters an appearance of inflexible consistency, which is often mistaken for greatness of mind, and not seldom received as a substitute for honesty. In all that related to his kingly office, he was the slave of deep-rooted selfishness ; and no feeling of a kindly nature ever was allowed access to his bosom, whenever his power was concerned, either in its maintenance, or in the manner of exercising it. In other respects, he was a man of amiable disposition, and few princes have been more exemplary in their domestic habits, or in the offices of private friendship. But the instant that his prerogative was concerned, or his bigotry interfered with, or his will thwarted, the most unbending pride, the most bitter animosity, the most calculating coldness of heart, the most unforgiving resentment, took possession of his breast, and swayed it by turns. The habits of friendship, the ties of blood, the dictates of conscience, the rules of honesty, were alike forgotten ; and the fury of the tyrant, with the resources of a cunning which mental alienation is supposed to whet, were ready to circumvent or destroy all who interposed an obstacle to the fierceness of unbridled desire. His conduct throughout the American war, and towards the Irish people, has often been cited as illustrative of the dark side of his public character ; and his treatment of his eldest son, whom he hated with a hatred scarcely consistent with the supposition of a sound mind, seems to illustrate the shadier part of his personal disposition ; but it was in truth only another part of his public, his professional conduct ; for he had no better reason for this implacable aversion, than the jealousy which men have of their successors.”

The names of Wilberforce, Windham, Canning, Sheridan, and Fox continually occur in these memoirs, with

incidents and anecdotes strikingly illustrative of their characters. Some singular specimens are given of the manner in which Wilberforce was accustomed to mingle his praises and censures of his friends and their measures, and of the trials to which he not seldom subjected them, from his scrupulous conscience and uncertain judgments. "The Premier," said he, referring to Mr. Addington, "is a man of sense, of a generous mind, and pure intentions, and of more religion than almost any other politician; but, alas! he has sadly disappointed me." On the other hand, Addington always expressed the highest admiration of Mr. Wilberforce's piety, benevolence, talents, and eloquence, but could not entertain the same opinion of his judgment, firmness, and consistency in matters of business. In proof of this, he repeated the following anecdote, which is here given from the author's notes as taken at the time. "Lord Sidmouth told us, that one morning, at a cabinet meeting, after an important debate in the House of Commons, and much anxiety as to the result of the question, some one said, 'I wonder how Wilberforce voted last night.' On which Lord Liverpool observed, 'I do not know how he voted, but of this I am pretty sure, that in whatever way he voted, he repents of his vote this morning.' Lord Sidmouth added, 'It was odd enough, that, no sooner had I returned to my office, than Wilberforce was announced, who said, 'Lord Sidmouth, you will be surprised at the vote I gave last evening, and indeed I am not myself altogether satisfied with it.' To which I replied, 'My dear Wilberforce, I shall never be surprised at any vote you may give.' Pursuing the conversation, I soon convinced him that he had really voted wrong, when he said, 'Dear me! I wish I had seen you last night before the debate.' "

It was honorable to Mr. Sheridan, that, notwithstanding their wide diversity of political opinion and yet greater differences of private character, there was a cordial intimacy between him and Mr. Addington, which survived many changes, and was the source of much mutual satisfaction. "There is no man," said Sheridan to him, "who has told me more painful truths than you have; and yet you will do me the justice to believe, that there is no one for whom I feel more respect and regard. I have too many irregularities in private life to reproach myself with; but I may safely say,

that my conscience is clear towards my country.” He was accustomed to pay frequent visits at Richmond Park, the country residence of Lord Sidmouth, where the charms of his conversation, and his ready acquiescence in the quiet and regular habits of the family, never failed to insure him a hearty welcome. “ My visits here,” said he, “ may possibly be misconstrued by my friends ” ; as if he was expecting something from the minister. “ But I hope you know, Mr. Addington, that I have an *unpurchasable* mind.”

Among the prominent labors, not always successful, of Lord Sidmouth in the internal administration of the country, may be numbered the modification he attempted of the laws in regard to Dissenters ; his efforts in suppressing the riots which from time to time sprang up, both in the agricultural and manufacturing districts, and were sometimes carried to deplorable excesses ; and the prosecutions under his authority for blasphemous publications.

His celebrated bill relating to Dissenters, involving the whole principle of religious toleration, was welcomed, at first, with apparent cordiality ; but afterwards, as its details were more fully understood, it occasioned great diversity of opinion, and was the source of no little perplexity and opposition to the ministry. We remember the intense excitement which it awakened in 1811, and the crowds of anxious Dissenters, especially of the Methodists and Presbyterians, who were accustomed on the nights of debate to gather around the houses of Parliament, and either at the bar of that of the Lords, or in the gallery of the Commons, with their eager, careworn countenances, await the result. The immediate object of Lord Sidmouth was such as must approve itself to every reflecting mind, — to guard against indecorum in the public worship growing out of improprieties in times or places, and to secure something approaching to the requisite qualifications in those who might undertake to officiate.

“ The framers of that act,” says that venerable prelate, Dr. Barrington, who for more than half a century adorned the Episcopal bench, and was then writing in his extreme yet vigorous old age, “ conceived that the religious duties of the respective congregations would never be performed but in places exclusively appropriated to divine service, and by ministers qualified by education, by attested respectability in point of morals, and of a

proper age to add weight to their prayers, and impression to their instructions. So long as the Toleration Act was thus understood, dissenting teachers were respected by their own people, and esteemed by the Establishment. But with modern sectaries the case is very different. They assemble in barns, in rooms of private houses, or in other buildings of the most improper kind, to hear the wild effusions of a mechanic or a ploughboy, perhaps not more than fifteen years of age, destitute of the first rudiments of learning, sacred or profane." — Vol. III. pp. 40, 41.

As a curious evidence of this ignorance, the author gives an example of eighteen different ways, all of them wrong, some of them ludicrously absurd,* in which the words "dissenting, minister, teacher, preacher, and Gospel," were spelt by persons applying for licenses within the county of Middlesex, which, as including the city of London, might be supposed to furnish the most favorable examples. Other instances yet more lamentable and humiliating were brought to light from other districts and dioceses in the country ; and among them the author thus describes a circumstance which occurred at the quarter sessions at Stafford.

" The magistrates assembled, having received some previous intimation that a man who could neither read nor write meant to apply for a license to become a religious teacher ; and being desirous of learning whether what had been told them of the ignorance of the applicant was true, the chairman bade him take a pen and sign his name. To this he replied, ' I don't come here to write : I have no business to sign any thing.' ' No ? ' said the magistrate ; ' read the clause in this Act of Parliament, and then you will see whether you are required to sign your name or not : please to read out.' ' I don't come here,' was the reply, ' either to read or write.' ' Pray,' said the magistrate, ' can you write ? ' ' I am not ashamed to say,' replied he, ' that I can't.' ' Can you read ? ' ' No.' ' Why, surely, it is very strange that you, who can neither read nor write, should presume to take upon yourself the important office of a religious teacher, when you are not able to peruse the Bible, which is the fountain of religion.' To this pointed reproof he replied, ' If *you* don't know what inspiration is, *I* do, for I have felt it.' He then threw down his sixpence,

* Of these we subjoin a few examples : — Precher of the Gospell ; Precher of the Gospole ; Minister of the Gospel ; Preacher of teacher the Gospel Bappist ; a Decenting teacher, and a dissenting teacher ; Prashr of the Gosepll.

took up his license, and went his way to preach the Gospel which he could not read." — Vol III. pp. 42, 43.

It would seem no very arrogant assumption of civil authority to seek to protect a people from the effects of ignorance like this ; and at first the proposal met, if not the hearty approbation, at least the acquiescence, of many eminent persons among the Dissenters themselves. But the well-known jealousy of Dissent, or what by one was called its " morbid sensibility," was quickened as the debate advanced. Both Mr. Belsham, of the Unitarian denomination, and Dr. Adam Clarke, the acknowledged head at that period of the Methodist connection, who had each addressed Lord Sidmouth in the most respectful terms in published letters upon the subject, seemed to change their first impressions of it, and the ministry were finally compelled to relinquish a measure which cost them much perplexity in its preparation, and much mortification in its final relinquishment.

" Every man," says Mr. Belsham, in his address to Lord Sidmouth, for some portions of which, however, he obtained no favor with his brethren, " every man may teach or preach without molestation. Let the miserable fanatic, who fancies that he is inwardly called to reform the world, pour out his pious nonsense. His raving is harmless. He will quickly find that he can get no hearers ; and after having tried his gifts till he is tired, honest John will return to his bodkin or his awl, perhaps convinced that he has mistaken his profession, or, more probably, denouncing the vengeance of Heaven upon those who refuse to listen to so divine a teacher."

It was the error, and it proved to be the misfortune, of Addington's, as well as the preceding administration, to attempt much in the courts of justice, in which nothing was so apparent as their total failure. The prosecutions, in 1793, of Horne Tooke, Hardy, Stone, and others, charged with high treason, ended only in the defeat of government, and consequently in adding to the power of its enemies. The same results followed Lord Sidmouth's attempts to bring to punishment Hone and others for blasphemous publications, the evident design of some of which was to turn into ridicule the formularies of the Established Church, to destroy the salutary influence of the ministers of religion, and to bring Christianity itself into contempt. But it must not be forgotten,

that the effect of all such prosecutions is to diffuse the mischief which it is intended to heal. For one reader whom the intrinsic merits or demerits of an obnoxious article might obtain, a hundred will be gained by the prosecution. Curiosity, and perhaps an honest sense of injustice, or fears of violating the freedom of the press, will enlist thousands of zealous opponents, who perhaps would otherwise have never heard of the original offence ; and the offender himself will escape without dishonor, possibly with just the sort of glory which he covets, when, had he been but let alone, he and his book would have fallen together into obscurity or contempt.

"It should not be forgotten," says the biographer, in words we are happy to quote, "that a government, on such occasions as these, is placed in a very unfavorable point of view. It appears in the character of a prosecutor ; the images of past times arise on the memory, — the fires of Smithfield, the dungeons of the Inquisition, the cruel execution of penal laws. Amongst the jurors of a great metropolis, in a highly civilized state of society, there must always be found some who are indifferent to religion, and others who are hostile. Such men will go any lengths, rather than encourage the government in what they will call intolerance. It is in vain to represent to them the difference between the fair exercise of the rights of free inquiry, and the indecent and wicked abuse of such rights. They will distinguish nothing ; they will hear nothing ; and, by plausible declamation, they affect the minds of their fellows. Pious and good men, therefore, must consider, — and it is a problem which can only be determined by the particular circumstances and difficulties of each separate case, — whether it may not frequently be preferable to restrain their virtuous indignation ; and instead of interposing the shield of the law in defence of religion against every graceless and despicable assailant, to leave so sacred a cause to be protected by the good sense and good feeling of society at large. The enemies of the best interests of mankind will thus be defeated ; for they will fall into neglect and oblivion even from the very circumstance of their not being noticed." — Vol. III. pp. 204, 205.

It was with like policy and wisdom that Queen Caroline, the persecuted and, if not criminal, most unfortunate wife of George IV., resisted all attempts of her friends to bring to trial the authors of any publications against herself. However wanting in discretion in other regards, she had the good sense to perceive, that whatever of harm may be done by such libels is, by the prosecution, only indefinitely diffused ; and

that however clearly the falsehood or the exaggeration may be exposed, the sting of the calumny remains.

No inconsiderable part of the third volume of these memoirs is occupied with a narrative of the riotous and treasonable conspiracies which, from 1817 to 1820, disturbed the peace of the kingdom, and kept in perpetual requisition the vigilance of the government. In Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and other portions of the kingdom, but especially in the manufacturing districts, disaffection spread to the most alarming extent. The lower orders frequently assembled in large bodies, and a general union was threatened of the discontented throughout the kingdom. Of these, the riots in Manchester were the most alarming, enlisting the greatest numbers, conducted with a system of organization and with a tone of defiance which indicated efforts to involve the whole country in the horrors of a revolution. The suppression of these disorders occupied, for months together, the anxious solicitude of the government, and the strong measures they were compelled to adopt exposed them to extreme abuse and danger. Lord Sidmouth, whose position at the head of the Home Office imposed upon him the weight of responsibility, and demanded personal labors that left no moments for domestic satisfaction, or for attention even to the most pressing private duties,* complained, "that at such a crisis the existing laws should be found inadequate to the difficulties and dangers with which the government had then to contend, and which could only be overcome by the law or the sword." He met with the usual fate of ministers under such circumstances ; being charged by the one party with a want of the requisite decision and firmness, — a charge not confined at all to this occasion, — and by the other, for the strong measures which he actually adopted, subjected to the grossest misrepresentations, and, as says Dr. Pellew, "to a greater amount of undeserved obloquy than at any other period of his life."

There can hardly be a question, that, however the admin-

* It was at this crisis that Lord Sidmouth sustained the loss of a brother, to whom he was most tenderly attached, and who had acquired in an unusual degree the respect and confidence of his friends. And his biographer adduces it as an evidence of the absorbing nature of official duties in such high places in England, that "it was with the utmost difficulty and inconvenience he could obtain the melancholy gratification of attending the remains of his lamented brother to their last earthly abode."

istration of Lord Sidmouth might have been wanting, as was the character of the man, in firmness on other occasions, it was fully displayed on this. A comparison which the writer draws between “the different modes adopted for the dispersion of the riotous assemblages at Manchester in 1819 and at Bristol in 1831,” will fully vindicate the course he pursued, and the humanity no less than the wisdom of decision in all like exigencies.

“ In the former instance, a prompt and vigorous system was pursued, and the town was saved and restored to tranquillity in a few hours, at an expense of only six lives, a few criminals consigned to imprisonment, and the loss of a day’s industry. But in the case of Bristol, the deadly torpor of non-interference, arising from an apprehension, on the part of the military commander, that he would not receive the support of the government, if he acted in a vigorous manner, consigned the doomed city for three days to the merciless fury of the mob, from which it was only at length rescued at the tremendous cost of the Episcopal Palace, both the prisons, the Mansion House, Excise Office, Custom-House, and numerous private dwellings of the respectable inhabitants sacked and destroyed, many lives either sacrificed by the soldiery, or destroyed in the conflagration of the city ; and, to close the melancholy catalogue, twenty-one miserable criminals, of whom four were executed, condemned to death by the outraged laws of their country. This was the difference in effect between a decisive and a hesitating system of policy.”
— Vol. III. pp. 264, 265.

It was in a strong desire for revenge for punishments previously inflicted, superadded to an intense hatred of the government, and unquestionably to some just sense of oppression, that the atrocious conspiracy to assassinate the king’s ministers, while assembled at a cabinet dinner, originated. It appears, that the ringleader in this ferocious plot, Arthur Thistlewood, had been condemned in May, 1818, to one year’s imprisonment in Horsham jail, for sending a challenge to Lord Sidmouth ; and on obtaining his release and returning to some treasonable practices, in which he was thwarted, he began with his accomplices to meditate a yet darker crime.

“ Lord Sidmouth used to state, that he early became acquainted with the particulars of this scheme, which were of so frantic and sanguinary a character, as at first hardly to appear credi-

ble. Facts, however, too clearly proved that there were, at the least, from twenty to thirty persons, who had resolved to obtain admittance into the house, where the ministers were assembled at their customary weekly dinner, under pretence of presenting a note, and to massacre the whole ; and then, taking advantage of the panic which this would occasion, to set fire to the barracks, seize the artillery, Mansion House, Bank, and Tower, and establish a provisional government ! Such a plan, of which the absurdity almost equalled the criminality, the ministers would scarcely have regarded as seriously adopted, but that they knew the desperate character of the men, and had ascertained that a dépôt of arms and ammunition had actually been formed at the lodgings of one of them. Lord Sidmouth had also been apprised, that on a previous occasion, when the cabinet dinner was to take place at Lord Westmoreland's, Thistlewood and one of his accomplices had resolved to wait at his Lordship's door, in order to observe the respective ministers alight from their carriages, and thus make themselves better acquainted with their persons."

The result of this execrable conspiracy needs not be repeated. It is well known, that the plot was early communicated to the government by one of the conspirators ; that every step of its progress was observed and understood ; and that just upon the point of its completion, and while they were preparing to proceed at the appointed hour to the house of Lord Harrowby, most of the conspirators were seized, after a desperate resistance, at their rendezvous in Cato street ; and five of the principals underwent the righteous retribution of the law for their atrocious crimes. Whatever may be thought of the general policy of the government, or however just may have been the complaints of the disaffected about some of their measures, there can be but one opinion, that this was one of the most atrocious and bloody projects that ever entered into the human imagination ; requiring for its execution, though not contemplating so wide a ruin, a sterner purpose and a more diabolical cruelty than even the Gunpowder Plot, in the days of King James, which aimed at the destruction of the whole Parliament of England.

It appears in the Appendix to this work, that a proposal had been made, under the auspices of Lord Sidmouth, to form an association for the encouragement of literature, by establishing a society of authors, and assigning certain premiums to works of genius, of the claims to which the members of the association were to be constituted the judges. The proposal

was submitted to the judgment of Sir Walter Scott, through a friend of Lord Sidmouth, and the reply, which does not appear in his Works, is valuable, as giving the judgment of an experienced man of letters, and for its allusions to his personal experience as an author. We have room only for a part of it.

" In the first place, I think such an association entirely useless. If a man of any rank or station does any thing in the present day worthy of the patronage of the public, he is sure to obtain it. For such a work of genius as the plan proposes to remunerate with 100*l.*, any bookseller would give ten or twenty times that sum ; and for the work of an author of any eminence 3000*l.* or 4000*l.* is a very common recompense. In short, a man may, according to his talents, make from 500*l.* a year to as many thousands, providing he employs those talents with prudence and diligence. With such rewards before them, men will not willingly contend for a much more petty prize, where failure would be a sort of dishonor, and where the honor acquired by success might be very doubtful. There is therefore really no occasion for encouraging, by a society, the competition of authors. The land is before them, and if they really have merit, they seldom fail to conquer their share of public applause and private profit.

" It will happen, no doubt, that, either from the improvidence which sometimes attends genius, or from singularly adverse circumstances, or from some peculiar turn of temper, habits, or disposition, men of great genius and talent miss the tide of fortune and popularity, fall among the shallows, and make a bad voyage of it. It would highly become his Majesty, in the honorable zeal which he has evinced for the encouragement of literature in all its branches, to consider the cases of such individuals ; but such cases are now-a-days extremely rare. I cannot, in my knowledge of letters, recollect more than two men whose merit is undeniable, while I am afraid their circumstances are narrow. I mean Coleridge and Maturin. To give either, or both of them, such relief as his Majesty's princely benevolence might judge fitting would be an action well becoming his royal munificence, and of a piece with many other generous actions of the same kind. But I protest that (excepting perhaps Bloomfield, of whose circumstances I know little) I do not remember any other of undisputed genius, who could gracefully accept 100*l.* a year, or to whom such a sum could be handsomely offered. That there would be men enough to grasp at it would be certain ; but then they would be the very individuals whose mediocrity of genius and active cupidity of dis-

position would render them underserving of the royal benevolence, or render the royal benevolence ridiculous, if bestowed upon them.

" But the association is not merely unnecessary and useless ; it will, if attempted, meet a grand and mortifying failure, and that from a great concurrence of reasons. In the first place, you propose (if I understand you rightly) to exclude —, —, —, &c., for reasons moral or political. But allowing these reasons their full weight, how will the public look on an association for literary purposes, where such men, whose talents are undisputed, are either left out or choose to stay out ? or what weight would that society have on the public mind ? Very little, I should think ; while it would be liable to all the shots which malice and wit mingled could fire against it. But besides this, I think (judging, however, only from my own feelings) that few men who have acquired some reputation in literature would choose to enrol themselves with the obscure pedants of universities and schools, — men most respectable, doubtless, and useful in their own way, — excellent judges of an obscure passage in a Greek author, — understanding, perhaps, the value of a bottle of old port, — connoisseurs in tobacco, and not wholly ignorant of the mystery of punch-making ; but certainly a sort of persons whom I, for one, would never wish to sit with, as assessors of the fine arts. There are many men, and I know several myself, to whom this description does not apply. But for one who has lived all his life with gentlemen and men of the world, to mingle his voice with men who have lived entirely out of the world, and whose opinions must be founded on principles so different from our own, would be no very pleasing situation. Besides, every man who has acquired any celebrity in letters would naturally feel that the object, or rather the natural consequence, of such a society would be to *average* talent, and that while he brought to the common stock all which he had of his own, he was, on the contrary, to take on his shoulders a portion of their lack of public credit. Now this is what no one will consider as fair play ; and I believe you will find it very difficult to recruit your honorary class, on such conditions, with those names which you would be most desirous to have, and without which a national institution of the kind would be a jest.

" But we will suppose them all filled up, and assembled. By what rule of criticism are they to proceed in determining the merits of the candidates on whom they are to sit in judgment ? The Lake school have one way of judging, — that of Scotland another, — Gifford, Frere, Canning, &c., a third, — and twenty

others have as many besides. The vote would not be like that of the Institute ; for in science, and even in painting and sculpture, there are conceded points, on which all men make a common stand. But in literature you will find twenty people entertaining as many different opinions upon that which is called taste, in proportion to their different temperaments, habits, and prejudices of education. They *could* only agree upon *one* rule of decision, and that would be to choose the pieces which were least *faulty* ; for though literary men do not agree in their estimates of excellence, they coincide, in general, in condemning the same class of errors. But the poems, thus unexceptionable, belong in general to that very class of mediocrity, which neither gods, men, nor columns, not even the columns of a modern newspaper, are disposed to tolerate, and which are assuredly sufficiently common, without being placed under the special patronage of a society." — Vol. III. pp. 480 – 483.

Lord Sidmouth, amidst the incessant pressure of public duties, was no stranger to the usual allotment of domestic sorrows. In 1811, he experienced a severe affliction in the death of Lady Sidmouth, who had been for nearly thirty years the solace of his domestic hours, and his strength under the burden of official cares. She is represented as a lady of distinguished worth and excellence, whose purity and simplicity, refinement and delicacy of character, corresponding to unusual personal attractions, revealed themselves in the most engaging manner to the objects of her attachment, and impressed her memory on their hearts. As might have been expected from a man of his well-regulated and wisely balanced disposition, Lord Sidmouth submitted to this trial with a calm and chastened sorrow ; and his resignation, the evident result of his established Christian faith, was beautifully expressed, both in letters to his friends and in his whole deportment long afterwards.

But a yet heavier trial awaited him in the long protracted sickness and mental alienation of his eldest son. The intellectual and moral qualities of this young man had justified the highest hopes concerning him ; and as the heir of the titles and honors of his father, his education and opening character had been watched with fond expectation. But severe application to his studies made early ravages upon his health. " He became grave, taciturn, and abstracted. While he seemed to derive satisfaction from books and exercise, and manifested a consciousness of persons and events, in all be-

sides his fine understanding remained locked up to a melancholy degree ; and from 1805 to his death in 1823, — a period of eighteen years, — neither the sound of his voice, the expression of any desire or emotion, nor a single indication of pleasure or pain broke the awful monotony of mental inaction.” This singular case is represented by his father as the consequence of excessive application to study at too early a period of life, and is justly held up as a warning to those who would prematurely force the youthful mind into efforts beyond its strength.

The character of Lord Sidmouth was eminently a religious one, and under the influence of Christian faith he sustained well the various trials to which, through a long life, he was subjected. For twenty years after he had withdrawn from office, he lived in comparative retirement, and died in 1844, at the age of eighty-seven. “The progress of his serene and protracted old-age had, as regarded the earliest intimates of his youth, left him altogether alone, and he stood among his loving and admiring descendants of the present peaceful generation a venerable memorial of the anxious times and astounding scenes he had witnessed, like some ancient tower surrounded by modern habitations.” In common with Lords Eldon, Stowell, and Ellenborough, he held the most narrow notions on some of the political and religious questions agitated in his time, was a slavish adherent to the conservative party, a bitter enemy to every motion for reform, and looked with distrust upon the progress of general education. That he was, in any high sense of the word, a great man was not even by his fervent admirers pretended.

We cannot adduce a fairer or more impartial estimate of his claims than is exhibited by his biographer in the concluding pages of his work.

“ Whatever degree of merit may have belonged to Lord Sidmouth as a statesman, in treating of his personal character there can be no hesitation in assigning to him the possession of those qualifications which constitute the charm and ornament of private life. His temper, reported to have been naturally warm, had been brought so habitually under the influence of self-control, that, during a close intimacy of twenty-four years, the author never in a single instance knew it to be unreasonably disturbed. The same equanimity governed all the sensibilities and affections of his mind. It restrained his every feeling — his hopes and

fears, his joys and sorrows, his successes and disappointments — within the bounds of a Christian moderation, and preserved him ever calm, cheerful, and resigned, — the delight, the pride, the instructor of all around him. To the ambition of personal elevation and aggrandizement he was altogether a stranger: in all he did he was guided entirely by principle; and the only reward he ever desired for his services was the confidence and regard of his sovereign, the respect of good men, and the approbation of his own conscience.

“ His fortitude was surprising. Nothing could shake his nerves: on the expected approach, and on the sudden and unforeseen appearance, of danger, he was equally imperturbable. ‘ He considered,’ he once said to his father, ‘ that no one was fit to be a public man who cared a farthing whether he should die in his bed or on a scaffold’; and on the principle thus early laid down he consistently acted. The general rule of his life was unbending firmness of purpose, and a tenacious adherence to what he considered right, tempered by the utmost gentleness, moderation, and indulgence towards individuals, — an indulgence which extended even to their errors and imperfections, — one of his favorite maxims being, that ‘ it was a very important part of wisdom to know what to overlook.’ He had been much impressed with a remark made to him by King George III., — ‘ Give me the man who judges *one* human being with severity, and every other with indulgence’; and once, on repeating this to a friend, he added, that ‘ he had endeavoured to make it his own rule, and wished he had succeeded more perfectly.’ This benevolent disposition rendered him on all occasions, apart from public duty, one of the most placable, forbearing, and patient of men; it led him also to exercise towards all a generosity of the most expanded nature, far surpassing the bounds which prudence usually prescribes; and it created in him a confiding disposition — a desire to believe well, and a reluctance to think ill, of his fellow-creatures — most unusual in old age, and still more remarkable in one who must have seen so much of what was evil.

“ His unbending adherence to the principles and opinions with which he set out in life resembled that of his royal master, and was remarkable, even in those times when unchangeableness was more easily practised than it is at present. Of those who encountered, with him, the political storms of the revolutionary war, few succeeded so well in maintaining an undeviating and consistent course. It was an unwillingness — amounting in him almost to impossibility — to deviate from any favorite principle of action which somewhat accelerated his final retirement from public life, and which would, probably, have produced the same

result, even if his taking that step had not been so fully justified by his advancing years. Hence his opinions on the Roman Catholic and other great questions of his day never underwent any material variation ; and so far from approving of sudden and extensive alterations, even where some change might be desirable, the opinion he held was, that ‘where institutions had become defective, the rule of a statesman should be to *preserve* and *improve*.’ Yet, unchangeable as he himself was, he could make generous and liberal allowances for others. ‘I think it very uncharitable,’ he once said, ‘to condemn a man for expressing contrary opinions at different periods of his life, as we all know how continually new views of the same subject present themselves to the mind ; and why should we blame others for expressing what we so often, ourselves, *feel*? ’ The principal modification observable in his opinions as he advanced in years is one which denotes his constantly expanding benevolence, and the increasing influence of Christian feelings. ‘I used,’ he said, when speaking of the wars in which England had been engaged during his time, — ‘I used to think all the sufferings of war lost in its glory ; now I consider all its glory lost in its sufferings. So one’s feelings change.’

“ He always evinced an aversion to the spurious liberality of the day ; by which, in his opinion, right and wrong were too often confounded, and the soundest and most valuable principles surrendered. So strong, indeed, was this dislike, that, in the eagerness of conversation on some much-controverted subject, he once said to a friend, ‘I hate liberality : nine times out of ten it is cowardice, and the tenth time it is want of principle.’ The same feeling extended to the strained humanity of the age, which, when carried to the full extent of the mawkish sentiment prevalent at the period, tended, he thought, frequently to divert sympathy from its legitimate objects, — the deserving and unfortunate, — and to concentrate it upon the criminal and unworthy. When enlarging upon this topic, he usually concluded his observations with the following quotation from the poetry of the Anti-jacobin : —

‘ For the crushed beetle first, the widowed dove,
And all the warbled sorrows of the grove ;
Next, for poor suffering guilt ; and last of all,
For parents, friends, a king and country’s fall.’ ”

Vol. III. pp. 467 – 471.